

# Track and Field



*Alfons Brijdenbach*



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## Alfons Brijdenbach

### *A Real Jewel*

An American journalist, having seen him run for the first time in 1975, declared: "He is the greatest European 400 m runner in the whole history of athletics. He ought to come to us to be properly trained." At that time, Alfons Brijdenbach was only 18; but his skill was already striking, in spite of his youth. Never before had such easy, effective and graceful running been seen in this strenuous sprinting event. His speed increased with each race and speaks for itself: 49.2 in the first, in May 1972, and 45.86 in the eighth, in August 1973. The latter performance won him the title of junior European champion at Duisburg.

The senior European championships took place in Rome the following year. The young Belgian was certainly capable of outrunning his elders, yet unfortunately his self-assurance led him to break the rules: he turned too completely in the last straight and assumed too much control, so that he was eliminated at the semi-finals. What could have got into him—a policeman's son, so skilful and usually so sensible?

The American adventure did not appeal

to Alfons Brijdenbach very much; despite his disastrous gymnastic record, he managed instead to enter Louvain University in order to qualify as a PE instructor. He thus became involved in all forms of sport, whereby he has certainly lost some of his ease on the track. Moreover he has had the misfortune to come up against a formidable opponent, the prodigious Cuban champion Alberto Juantorena. As a crowning stroke of bad luck, he was placed in the outside lane in the finals of the Montreal Olympics. But none of this alters the fact that he is still by far the best European specialist.

#### ALFONS BRIJDENBACH

Born Oct. 12, 1954, in Belgium

#### AWARDS AND RECORDS

Junior European Champion 1973 of the 400 m at Duisburg with 45.86 sec  
1976 OG: 4th in the 400 m with 45.04  
1978 ECH: withdrawn from the 400 m heats  
Personal records: 20.88 in the 200 m; 45.04 in the 400 m